

enied enough pain medication awarded \$1.5 million / 26A

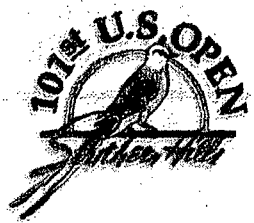


FRIDAY

JUNE 15, 2001 • METRO EDITION

### Hail, Hale

Irwin takes first-round lead of weather-shortened U.S. Open  
Sports/1D



# San Antonio Express-News

50¢

SERVING SOUTH TEXAS SINCE 1865

AVOIDING A THREAT TO SAN ANTONIO'S WATER

## Superfund campaign took 3 years



PHOTOS BY JERRY LARA/STAFF

Joe Soliz, a member of the Communities Organized for Public Service executive committee, leaves the R&H Oil Co. site Thursday.

## Refinery could be added to cleanup in 2 months



Irene Porter, 77, talks Thursday about her life in the neighborhood located near the former R&H Oil Co. The site has been targeted by the Environmental Protection Agency as a possible Superfund site.

BY GARY MARTIN

EXPRESS-NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Nearly three years after state officials asked the federal government to help clean up an abandoned San Antonio refinery, the site — which could threaten the city's drinking water — may be just 60 days away from being added to the EPA's Superfund list.

The Environmental Protection Agency followed through with the request Thursday and proposed that the old R&H Oil Co., a seven-acre tract of storage tanks, become one of 10 new sites eligible for cleanup under the \$1.5 billion annual program.

EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman called the Superfund program a way to provide a "cleaner,

safer future for our children."

She said cleanup sites remain a "top priority for the EPA, as well as the president."

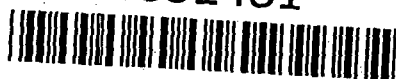
Decades of refining, oil storage, spills and leaks of petroleum wastes at the San Antonio facility have polluted a shallow aquifer not used for drinking, the EPA said in documents.

The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission asked the EPA in 1998 to evaluate the old R&H Oil site at 403 Somerset Road because the agency lacked the resources to tackle pollution it found seeping from abandoned refining systems and tanks.

The refining took place just hun-

See STATE/12A

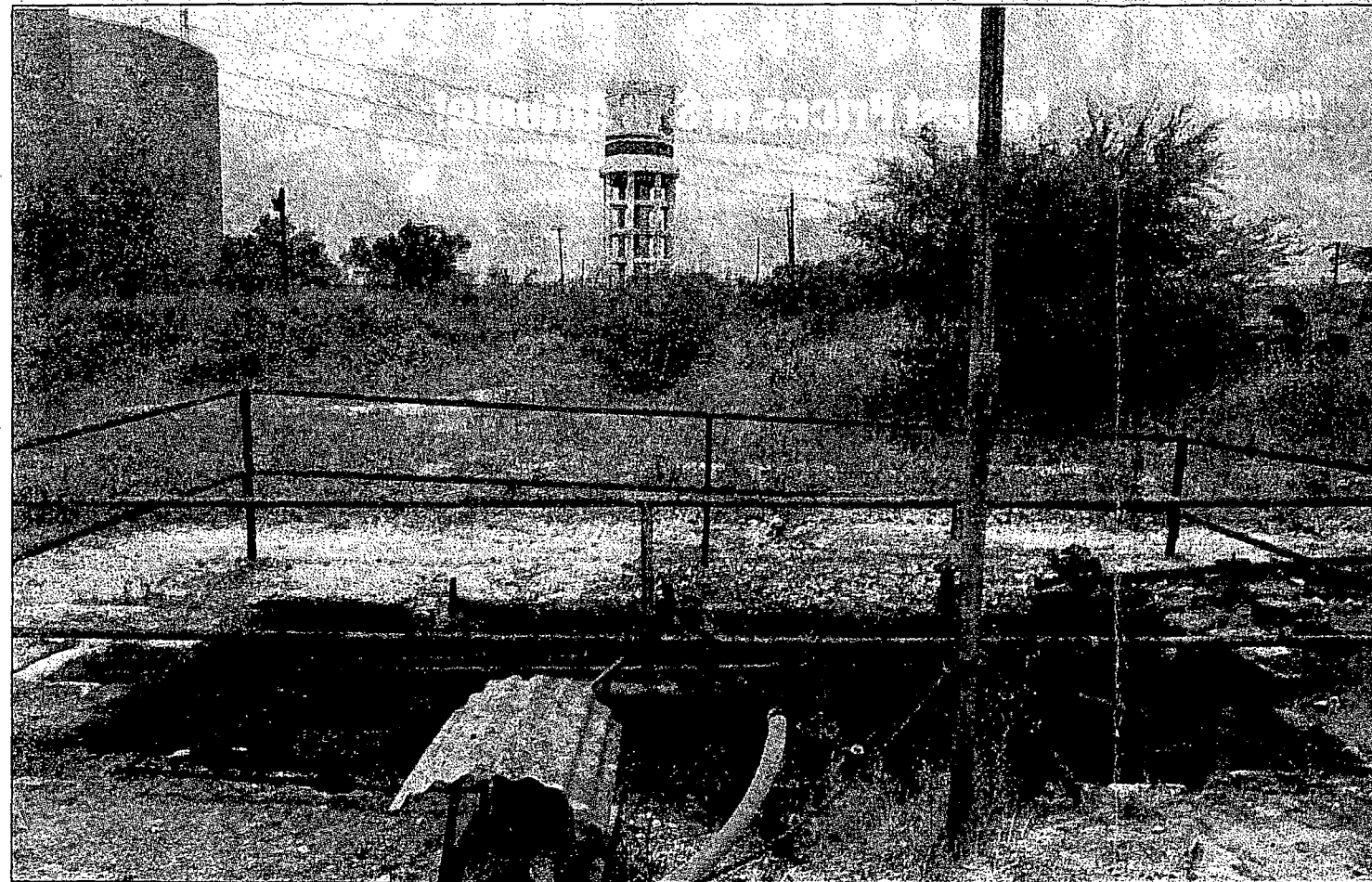
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Page 1 of 3 (over)

*"Left alone, over time it's possible these contaminants would percolate through to the Edwards and pose a threat. . . ."*

EPA SPOKESMAN DAVE BARY



JERRY LARA/STAFF

Pools of oil at the former R&H site are examples of what the EPA hopes to clean up as part of the Superfund program.

## EPA adding to list of Superfund sites



Sites added and proposed to the National Priorities List. Once the Environmental Protection Agency receives public comments, it determines whether to add the sites to the NPL. Once added, the sites undergo more investigation to determine what it will take to clean them up, how much it will cost, etc.

### Proposed for listing

- 1 Casmalia Resources  
Casmalia, Calif.
- 2 Matthiessen and Hegeler  
Zinc Co.  
LaSalle, Ill.
- 3 American Creosote Works Inc.  
Louisville, Miss.
- 4 MacKenzie Chemical Works Inc.  
Central Islip, N.Y.
- 5 Valmont TCE  
Hazle Township  
and West Hazleton, Pa.
- 6 Watson Johnson Landfill  
Richland Township, Pa.
- 7 Patrick Bayou  
Deer Park
- 8 R&H Oil Co.  
San Antonio
- 9 Eureka Mills  
Eureka, Utah
- 10 Ely Copper Mine  
Vershore, Vt.

### New on the list

- 1 Cooper Drum Co.  
South Gate, Calif.
- 2 Nuclear Metals Inc.  
Concord, Mass.
- 3 Sutton Brooks Disposal Area  
Tewksbury, Mass.
- 4 Griggs & Walnut  
Ground Water Plume  
Las Cruces, N.M.
- 5 Consolidated Iron and Metal  
Newburgh, N.Y.
- 6 Shenandoah Road Ground  
Water Contamination  
East Fishkill, N.Y.
- 7 Taylor Lumber and Treating  
Sheridan, Ore.
- 8 Lower Darby Creek Area  
Delaware/Philadelphia counties
- 9 Malone Service Co. Inc.  
Texas City
- 10 Elizabeth Mine  
Stafford, Vt.

## EPA Superfund facts

■ Created by Congress in 1980 in response to citizen concerns over uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites

Sites listed on the Superfund's National Priorities List (NPL)	1,236 as of Wednesday
Sites cleaned up 766 including 18 sites in Texas	Amount spent since 1980 \$17.7 billion
Average cleanup time 10.6 years to complete in 1996	Amount spent per year \$1.5 billion

Sources: Associated Press; Environmental Protection Agency; General Accounting Office

PATRICK ZELLER/STAFF

Page 2 of 3



# State had asked feds' help with refinery three years ago

CONTINUED FROM 1A

dreds of yards from Kelly AFB, an industrial aircraft repair depot that maintained jet and turbine engines for decades.

Air Force officials are monitoring a plume of ground water contamination from the military base, which is scheduled to close July 13.

A preliminary investigation by the EPA found a variety of contaminants from the refining process. The main contaminants are chlorinated solvents, such as trichloroethene.

The pollution is directly under the old gasoline and oil facility at R&H, and mixed with the trichloroethene flowing from Kelly.

"Adding this site to the Superfund list makes federal dollars available, allowing EPA and the TRNCC to speed their cleanup and meet the agencies' commitment to protect public health and our environment," said Gregg Cooke, the EPA regional administrator in Dallas.

Robert Huston, the TNRCC chairman in Austin, said the state would assist the EPA in the cleanup.

Cooperation between federal

and state agencies "is essential to clean up all contaminated properties, particularly those located in environmentally sensitive areas of our state," Huston said.

Thursday's action by the EPA opens a 60-day public comment period that ends Aug. 13. During that time, officials with the federal agency will begin developing a plan for cleanup and estimating the cost to remove the petroleum products from the aquifer.

According to the EPA, the contaminated aquifer, while not used as a water supply, lies directly above the Edwards Aquifer, San Antonio's sole source of drinking water.

The Edwards is one of many permeable aquifers "susceptible to natural creation of underground cavities and channels and, as such, are extremely vulnerable to contaminant migration," according to the EPA.

"The contaminants we have identified at the site pose a threat to the Edwards Aquifer," said Dave Bary, an EPA spokesman in Dallas.

"Left alone, over time it's possible these contaminants would

percolate through to the Edwards and pose a threat to drinking water supplies," he said.

But the Edwards Aquifer lies more than a 1,000 feet below the shallow aquifer, which is 20 to 40 feet below the ground surface and rests atop a 400-foot layer of dense clay and 600 feet of hard limestone.

Officials from the Edwards Aquifer Authority, the state environmental agency and the Air Force have said the pollutants in the shallow aquifer pose no threat to the Edwards unless a well sunk into the Edwards in that area is not properly cased or plugged.

Bary said there are public drinking water wells in the Edwards in the immediate area, and that the "concern is a possible interconnect from the well casings and Edwards Aquifer."

Democratic Rep. Ciro Rodriguez of San Antonio said the polluted shallow aquifer from the abandoned refinery and Kelly AFB poses a serious health threat to residents.

That pollution, he added, also is crippling economic development in the area, which lies about 6.5 miles south of down-

town.

The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) found no link between Kelly's current pollution and neighborhood health issues in the first phase of a health assessment released in 1999.

The agency is scheduled to release the study's second phase June 27.

If the site is placed on the Superfund list as expected, it will generate a federal assessment of the site's potential health effects.

By law, a health assessment has to be initiated within a year of the designation," said John Abraham, chief of the Exposure Investigations and Consultations Branch of ATSDR.

"We have a good working relationship with the Texas Department of Health, and we will be working with them," Abraham said. "We'll look at environmental sampling data and meet with the community, then look at health outcome data in the cancer registry."

Rodriguez has asked the EPA and Air Force to fund an aggressive cleanup, health outreach program and community reinvestment plan.

"I and the entire San Antonio community demand and deserve no less," the congressman said.

The refinery was established in 1938 and changed hands several times over the decades, operating as R&H Oil, Eldorado Refining and Marketing and Tropicana Energy Co. The facility was abandoned after April 1989.

"Sludge and tar-like material have been observed around the tanks, and various chemicals have been found in the water, including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc," an EPA document states.

The chemicals were found directly below the refinery, and have not migrated, Bary said, cautioning that the "contaminants from R&H Oil are intermixed with contaminants from Kelly AFB."

The extent of the pollution prompted Texas to ask for federal aid three years ago, and Gov. Rick Perry on March 28 signed

off on the EPA's recommendation to add R&H Oil to list of proposed Superfund sites.

The EPA will consider a clean-up method called "pump and treat," which pulls the contaminated water to the surface. The pollutants are removed, and the water possibly will be injected back into the aquifer.

"We know we have a problem," Bary said. "We don't know now the precise solution to clean it up."

The EPA proposed nine other sites nationwide for Superfund cleanup, including Patrick Bayou in the Texas town of Deer Park.

The EPA will begin cleaning up 10 other locations approved Thursday for immediate action, including a 150-acre former hazardous waste storage site in Texas City.

*gmartin@express-news.net*  
Staff Writer Jerry Needham  
and Researcher Carolyn Edds  
contributed to this report.

# Neighbors applaud move to add facility to list

Rusted pipes, tanks, drums litter R&H site

BY SONJA GARZA  
AND JERRY NEEDHAM  
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Residents who live in the shadow of the defunct R&H Oil Co. refinery across Somerset Road consider the proposed cleanup a long time coming.

"When I heard the news, I was, like, 'Thank God.' It's been that way for years," said Melissa Acosta, who lives about a block from the abandoned refinery.

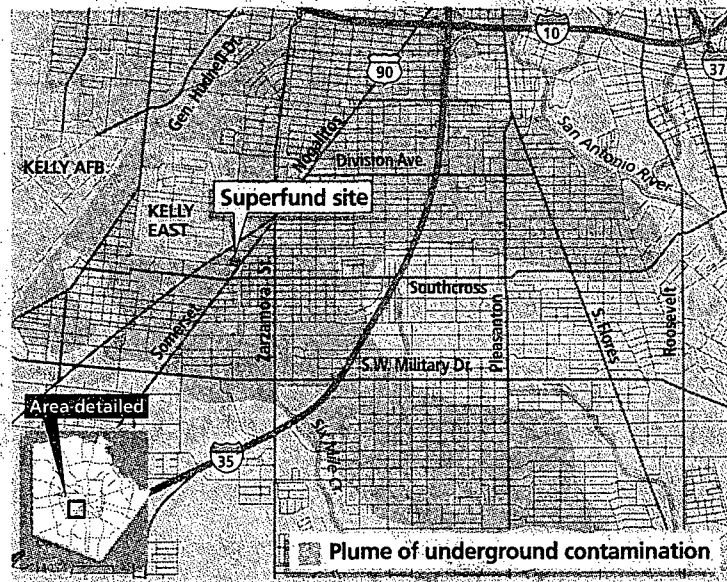
The 28-year-old schoolteacher can see the former oil company's corroded tanks from her front yard and considers the site an eyesore.

"Just looking at it, it's disgusting," she said. "I always told my roommate, 'Who knows what kind of diseases or threats to our health (it poses)?"

Irene H. Porter, 77, who lives across the street from the old refinery, said she's concerned about the health of her two great-granddaughters, given her home's proximity to the polluted site. The 5-year-old twins visit her nearly every day.

Porter said she hasn't noticed any health problems, but "if they clean it up, it's better."

Joe Soliz, an executive committee member for Communities Organized for Public Service, said the former R&H Oil Co. once was a flourishing business for the South Side.



MARK BLACKWELL/STAFF

"But as you can tell today," he said, "it's somebody's garbage."

A broken chain-link gate fails to block the entrance of the abandoned refinery, consisting of a series of rusted oil tanks and decaying pipes.

Pipes, dozens of 55-gallon drums — some that officials say contain chlorinated solvents — and about 40 above-ground storage tanks of 5,000- to 400,000-gallon capacities, remain at the site.

Discarded tires and plastic buckets, some containing a black liquid, litter the grounds, along with the occasional puddle of black sludge.

Soliz, who grew up on the South Side, said the polluted area affects everything from the environment to property values.

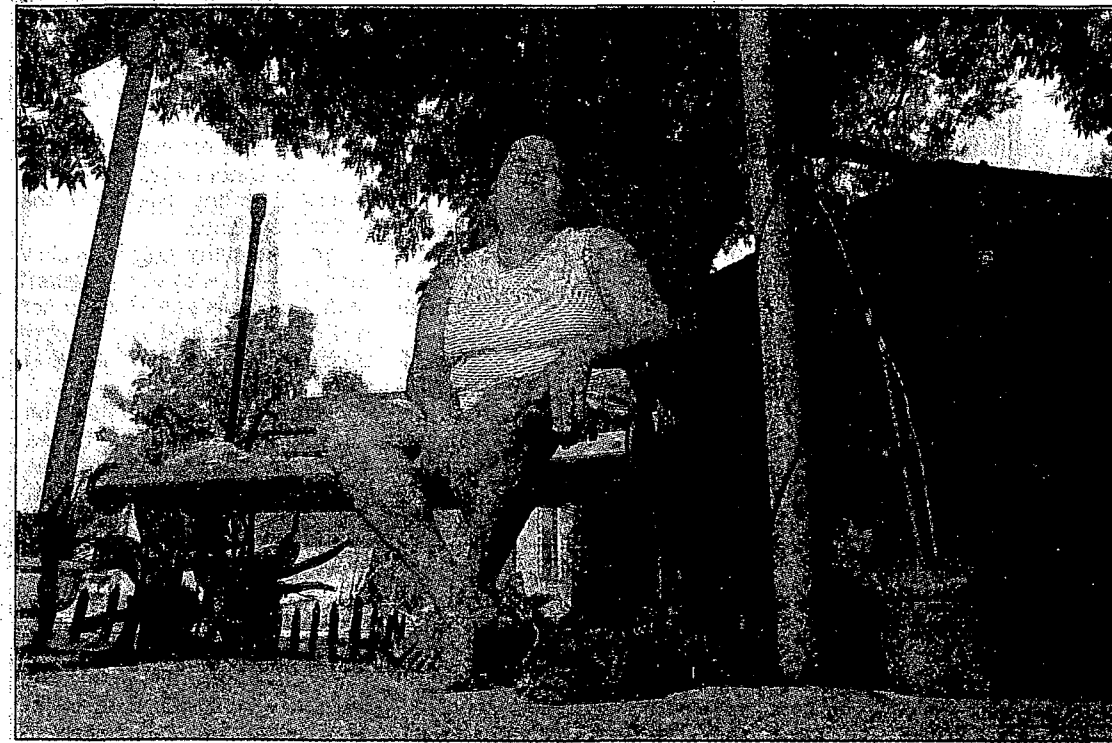
"Would you buy a home here?" he asked.

The polluted site sits atop a sea of shallow groundwater pollution caused by Kelly AFB and other industries.

Many residents fear the contamination under their homes devalues their properties. But the Bexar Appraisal District concluded last year, after market studies on home sales in areas affected by the pollution, that "at the present time, there is no demonstrable negative market impact on property values as a result of groundwater contamination."

Mayor Ed Garza said the designation of the old gasoline refinery was great news, because the more assistance the city receives from the federal government to resolve environmental problems "the better off we'll be."

While community members



JERRY LARA/STAFF

Melissa Acosta, 28, enjoys the afternoon in her shaded back yard Thursday. Although Acosta has lived near the old R&H Oil Co. for about six years, she's glad that the refinery is a possible Superfund site.

applaud the EPA for moving toward cleanup of the abandoned refinery. Armando Quintanilla said he hopes Kelly doesn't use it as an excuse to shirk its cleanup responsibility.

"I hope it doesn't delay Kelly from proceeding full steam ahead," said Quintanilla, a former Kelly employee who moved from the area after living there 48 years.

"The EPA has known about the contamination in the neighborhoods since the '80s and to this date, there is no plan to clean up the contamination,"

said Quintanilla, secretary of the Center for Health and Environmental Justice and member of the Kelly AFB Restoration Advisory Board.

Councilman Enrique Martin, whose district includes Kelly AFB, said the city will not let the Air Force off the hook for final cleanup responsibility.

Kelly, with far worse pollution problems, did not land on the federal Superfund list, but EPA officials have said that's because the Air Force was standing ready to carry out the cleanup.

That's not the case with the

R&H Oil site, where it may take years to track down and force responsible parties to reimburse the government, if they have resources to do so, officials said.

William Ryan, chief of environmental restoration at Kelly for the Air Force Base Conversion Agency, said of the base cleanup: "We're still responsible for what we're responsible for, and we'll move forward with our program."

sgarza@express-news.net  
Staff Writer William Pack contributed to this report.



# ctivity

such precautions, Mr. Feldman said, citing several reasons:

■ Most older women are past menopause, so they don't fear getting pregnant.

■ While the safe sex battles of the 1980s were raging, many of today's seniors were settled down in marriages, so sexually transmitted diseases "were something that happened to somebody else."

■ They grew up at a time when men called the shots in most relationships.

■ And as senior citizens, women outnumber men, giving those men a lot of partners to choose from.

# Water pollution concern raised

## Air Force says risk to SA small

*Associated Press*

SAN ANTONIO — Concerns are being raised about the potential threat to the Edwards Aquifer in the wake of conflicting assessments of chemical contamination in and around soon-to-be-decommissioned Kelly Air Force Base.

The Air Force says that a 12-square-mile plume of contaminants in the shallow water table beneath the base poses minimal risk to the deeper Edwards because it is shielded by a 1,000-foot barrier of clay and limestone.

This month, the federal Environmental Protection Agency cast doubt on that determination by putting the abandoned R&H Oil Co. refinery on its list of Superfund cleanup sites. The refinery is next to the base.

The aquifer is San Antonio's primary source of drinking water.

Kelly's pollutants consist primarily of the chlorinated solvents perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene, both of which can cause liver and kidney damage.

An EPA document says water samples taken at the 7-acre abandoned refinery site found benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methylnaphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc. Those pollutants, the EPA says, "threaten nearby municipal water wells used by the city of San Antonio."

"I'm concerned about the contradictory statement by the EPA that the Edwards is threatened, because I don't believe it is," David Newman, environmental manager for the city, said in a report published Sunday in *San Antonio Express-News*.

Others are skeptical of the Air Force and its approach toward potential pollution of the aquifer from Kelly.

"The Department of Defense is going to do the least that they can," U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, said of the cleanup effort. "It's up to the community to look at it and do the right thing. We have an obligation and responsibility that we do everything so that in five years, we don't find that we did pollute the aquifer."

# Educators next Ho school

Continued from Page 15A.

"About 50 percent of associate or assistant superintendents are women, but we think there are a lot of reasons why they don't take that next step," said Sharon Adams-Taylor, director of member networks for the American Association of School Administrators.

She said that often superintendent jobs, particularly in larger districts, go to candidates willing to move, and women are often less willing to hop from district to district. Also, salaries for superintendents often aren't much higher than those for their assistants, making it less attractive to take jobs that can be high profile and politically charged.

Ms. Stripling's salary as superintendent of the southwest portion of the Houston district is \$200,000. Mr. Paige's salary was \$275,000, but her salary as his replacement has not been announced.

"Clearly, they are the people who are in the pipeline," Ms. Adams-Taylor said. "That's an issue for us, on how we get them to make that leap."

More are moving up in the nation's 56 largest districts, which are represented by the Council of the Great City Schools in Washington, D.C.

# Red-hot recorded

Continued from Page 15A.

"getting in the '60s and '70s," she said from her home in Salem, N.M., nestled in the heart of the Hatch Valley. "It hasn't improved."

She said she sold dry chile for about 60 cents a pound in the mid-1960s and paid about 80 cents an hour for labor. Now, she said, she's selling it for 82 cents a pound and paying much more for labor.

"If you're a farmer and it's really in your blood, you don't mind working long days as long as you have a little bit of profit and can enjoy life," Ms. Rutherford said.

"But when you work 10 to 12 hours a day and you can't even pay the bills, there's something wrong with that."

Chris Franzoy, whose family started growing chile in the Hatch Valley about 80 years ago, said he will continue to hang on as long as he can.

"It's a battle, and I'm not going to stop," he said. "I'm really pushing the Hatch chile thing. We have a niche market, something you can't get anywhere else."

Researchers say the intense sunlight and cool nights in the Hatch Valley result in a unique flavor. The valley stretches along the Rio Grande's southernmost bend





# SOUTHWEST WORKERS' UNION

*W. Ryan*

## Executive Board

President:  
Nick Charles

Vice-President:  
Jose Zimmerle

Secretary:  
Maria de la Cruz

## Executive Director

Chavel Lopez

## Program Developer

Ruben Solis

## ***OPEN LETTER TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY***

Southwest Workers Union (SWU) and the Committee for Environmental Justice Action (CEJA) thank you for inviting us in from the picket line outside to come in to participate in the open session. It is unfortunate that poor Communities and People of Color Communities often have to resort to protesting even to be given a chance to come into that, which should be our conference too. It is this type of non-communicative and non-pro active bureaucracy that creates mis-trust between communities and the EPA. The Environmental Protection Agency should have welcomed community participation. Instead, the door was shut in our face, and thanks for opening the door even if for a moment.

We in the SWU-CEJA community believe that the EPA, and yes we have many friends and allies inside the EPA, can play a pro-active role that is in line with EPA mission and vision. The EPA can take immediate action in the environmental clean up inside and outside of Kelly Air Force Base.

### WHAT CAN EPA DO?

1. Work with the community organizations in the affected communities to deal with the Air Force clean up of Kelly AFB by developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Air Force on the Off-base clean up plan.
2. EPA can hold a public hearing on the environmental clean up plan that is not Air Force controlled. The hearings can be done in partnership with the area US Congress people and Ciro Rodriguez office.
3. EPA must follow the NEJAC Guidelines for Public Participation
4. EPA must organize in coordination with all stakeholders a series of three (3) Roundtables: One on Health, one on environmental clean up and one on economic revitalization.
5. EPA must make ATSDR be fully inclusive of the community in their so-called Environmental Impact Statements.
6. EPA should enact an inter-agency approach to solving the Kelly AFB environmental and health problems. EPA and Congressman Rodriguez can bring together all the pertinent departments including, DOD, DOE EOL, HUD, EPA, TNRCC, DOC, etc. to sit around the table at the same time and to work together to come up with a model inter-agency solution.
7. EPA National Administrator must promote environmental justice by making sure that a brown's fields like Kelly gets the money to the clean up and redevelopment not what the City of San Antonio and the Greater Kelly Development Authority that have used HUD low income housing money for a Boeing Corp. Hanger, or to clean up the area where the GKDA building is being constructed.
8. EPA must compel the state TNRCC to take action on the issue of public participation and the lack thereof because of environmental racism and racial discrimination.
9. We ask our friends and allies inside EPA to help in our struggle to clean up KellyAFB



# SOUTHWEST WORKERS' UNION

## 10 REASONS WHY ARE WE PROTESTING KELLY AFB?

### Executive Board

President:  
Nick Charles

Vice-President:  
Jose Zimmerla

Secretary:  
Maria de la Cruz

### Executive Director

Chavel Lopez

### Program Developer

Ruben Solis

1. The whole plan for the closing and conversion of Kelly Air Force Base (KAFB) to Kelly USA has been flawed from day one. The revitalization of Kelly AFB does not include the communities surrounding the base. The Kelly USA plan only looks at economic development inside the base.
2. Kelly AFB fired approximately 10,000 skilled aircraft workers that were dislocated to other Air Force bases across the country dislocating them from their families, tearing families apart and creating hardships. Why? To create 20,000 new skilled aircraft jobs in Kelly USA.
3. Kelly AFB has long denied recognition of the fact that toxic environmental contamination is a real and big problem for Kelly and three surrounding communities including: South San Antonio, East Kelly and North Kelly Gardens. Only after community residents organized the Committee for Environmental Justice Action (CEJA) and begin to speak up about the health illnesses caused by the contamination and only after the story became public did Kelly AFB acknowledge responsibility for the environmental mess.
4. Kelly AFB is guilty of environmental racism. KAFB has NO environmental clean up in place and the closing date is July 13, 2001. The base closes on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> as a grim reminder of the death brought onto civilians working at KAFB, and community residents living around it. Why has the KAFB spend millions on environment but yet NO CLEAN UP PLAN IS IN PLACE. What the Air Force wants and is doing is 'walking away' from the problems they have created. Their plan is called natural attenuation (leave it alone).
5. The Base Closure Team meetings are closed to the public. The KAFB process has not allowed for public participation. Meetings are closed, or inaccessible, or held at 2 PM during the day as if working people can take time off from work to go make a presentation to the Air Force. Translation has been unavailable for Spanish speakers.
6. The Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) is totally AIR FORCE dominated with only two people who live in the affected communities.
7. The ATSDR environmental impact statement report has been a sham. Not only is it not a study it is not even a complete report. Nevertheless, ATSDR reported high levels of cancer in two to three zip codes that overlap with KAFB. The unfinished report cites low birth weight in newborn children and birth defects.
8. 85 former KAFB workers have ALS or Lou Gerhig's disease! The Air Force has yet to take action and do health study of former workers. The only KAFB action has been to question the certification process of each case confirmed by the South Texas ALS Association.
9. A radioactive weapons unit now at Pentex was housed near KAFB at Medina base where an atomic explosion mushroom was reported in 1964. The Department of Energy has not even acknowledged the atomic weapons site or held one hearing on the matter!
10. The Air Force as it is under the Department of Defense (DOD) does not have to follow the environmental laws and regulation. Because the Air Force has been above the law is the reason we are in the middle of this environmental and health nightmare today. Workers have testified how the Air Force dumped chemicals, acids, radioactive waste, solvents etc. onto the ground and Leon Creek.

Turn Over



## 10 REASONS WE ARE PROTESTING THE EPA?

1. Is the BUSH administration turning its back on the Global warming and protection of forests and enforcing environmental law and regulation equally in poor communities and communities of People of Color and in promoting environmental justice as opposed to environmental racism? For example, the new EPA administrator is holding a National Conference on Community Involvement and the ironic truth is that the local community has been excluded from participating in the conference.
2. We see an erosion of the Executive Order for Environmental Justice and a resurgence of environmental racism. For example the Civil Rights office of EPA is being moved to an obscure place and it is the office handling the Civil Rights Act Title VI-cases filed by community groups. The lack of staffing of environmental justice offices at the EPA is a real problem.
3. The EPA has violated the Principles for public participation as developed by the EPA NEJAC (National Environmental Justice Advisory Council). The NEJAC and the Environmental Justice offices of the EPA were developed in conjunction with the Executive Order on Environmental Justice implemented during the Browner administration. Is the new EPA administrator turning her back on real community participation and environmental justice?
4. The EPA has taken NO action to compel the Air Force or the Department of Defense (DOD) to clean up the environmental toxic contamination on base or off base. The EPA can take action on the off base contamination but the EPA representative to the RAB and the KAFB process has never met with the community but sits with the Air Force. To date NO memorandum of understanding exists between the KAFB and the EPA on taking action on the clean up.
5. ATSDR funded by EPA money is not serving the communities it supposes to serve and the ATSDR reports are 'flawed by design' because they do not capture the reality of the problem but almost always side with the Air Force and the City of San Antonio.
6. Southwest Workers Union (SWU) and the Committee for Environmental Justice Action (CEJA) have led the fight for the poor and People of Color communities surrounding KAFB since 1993 have toured representatives from the EPA Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas in the communities. Yet SWU-CEJA WERE NOT COMMUNICATED BY REGION 6 ABOUT THIS CONFERENCE NOR INVITED TO TOUR KAFB! (We had to find out from some one in the east coast! Thank goodness we have friends inside the EPA)
7. The EPA conference participants are visiting two San Antonio sites: One is Stone Creek and the other is the Alamo (could be military toxics left over by Santa Ana during the Alamo siege). The EPA should be visiting the Kelly Air Force sites both on base and off base. SWU-CEJA is prepared to do a community toxic tour for all EPA participants.
8. The EPA conference on community involvement should be open to the public!
9. Community environmental groups should be included in the agenda of the EPA conference
10. Visiting the Alamo on Juneteenth is an affront to all freedom loving people who stand against slavery (Versus the pro-slavery freedom fighters in the Alamo-Remember the Republic of Texas was a SLAVE republic.



# Region & State

Sunday, February 17, 2002

Dallas/Star  
Obituaries.

STAR-TELEGRAM • WWW.DFW.COM/NEWS

## Today

### STATE

#### Detectives focus on assault investigation

All seven of Cleburne's detectives are checking leads in last week's reported knife-point sexual assault of a 10-year-old girl in a Wal-Mart restroom, police spokesman Lt. Terry Powell says. A \$15,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and indictment of the man responsible has been posted by Schepp's Dairy as part of the company's effort to assist North Texas communities.

Story on 5B

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#### Writer lends color to Rayburn museum

"The Sam Rayburn Library and Museum in Bonham is one of those cold, gray, government-looking buildings; it's handsome in its own way, but devoid of color. The true blush, the critical splash of excitement is in the library's basement, at the foot of the stairs, at the end of a table stacked with a books. That's where MacPhelan Reese holds his court."

Art Chapman column on 5B

#### Black History Month events

##### Arlington

■ Friday, 7:30 p.m. — Panel discussion on racism at Grace Lutheran Church, 210 W. Park Row Drive, with *Star-Telegram* columnist Bob Ray Sanders and Allan Saxe, a professor at the University of Texas at Arlington. (817) 274-1626.

##### Fort Worth

■ Monday, 5 to 7 p.m. — The fifth annual Black History "Quiz Bowl" at the Panther branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs, 1500 Hemphill St. Contact Michelle McKenzie at (817) 924-6637.

■ All month — Display of photographs taken by Fort Worth photographer Diane Simons Lovell during her trips to Africa, North Richland Hills Library, 6720 N.E. Loop 820. (817) 427-6814.

##### Dallas

■ Wednesday, 12:15 p.m. — John Biggers' *Starry Crown: Connections to African-American Oral Traditions* with storytellers Liz Mikel and Tracy Bays in a special gallery performance. Horchow Auditorium at the Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 Harwood Road. Free with paid admission to museum. (214) 922-1200.

www.dallasmuseumofart.org.  
■ Fridays and Saturdays through Feb. 23, 8 p.m. — *Revolt/Revolution/Evolution*, a multimedia performance with poets and musicians including Uriah Elion, Ron Davison, Myron Jackson, Alejandro Perez and Jason Hunter at the South Dallas Cultural Center, 3400 S. Fitzhugh St., Dallas. \$5. (214) 939-2787.  
www.dallasblack.com/channel1/sdcc.

##### Irving

■ Tuesday, 7-8:30 p.m. — The Irving Black Arts Council pre-

## Nuclear waste plan questioned

By GINGER D. RICHARDSON  
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FORT WORTH — Local officials greeted with trepidation President Bush's decision to pursue a nuclear waste dump in Nevada, saying that the plan is fraught with public safety concerns that could affect millions of Texans.

The proposal to create a central repository for nuclear waste at Yucca

### NUCLEAR

Area municipal leaders say they are worried about radioactive waste possibly being shipped through Fort Worth-Dallas if the federal government builds a nuclear dump in Nevada.

Mountain — 90 miles northwest of Las Vegas — is being decried by environmentalists and Republican and

Democratic political leaders alike. In North Texas, there is concern that radioactive waste shipments will cross the Metroplex on highways and rail lines.

"Right now, I would have to say I don't like it," Fort Worth Councilman Chuck Silcox said Saturday. Silcox serves on the Regional Transportation Council, a board that serves Tarrant, Denton, Dallas, Collin and Johnson

counties. "I suspect the public will like it one bit either."

"The average person should be very cautious and very leery about this."

In a telephone interview from Toluca, Mexico, Mayor Kenneth Sanchez said he, too, has questions and wants more information about any federal safeguards that are being discussed.

More on NUCLEAR



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/JOE MITCHELL

Norman Lloyd, who worked at Kelly Air Force Base for 32 years, learned in 1994 that he had Lou Gehrig's disease.

## Lou Gehrig's disease found in many of base's ex-workers

By REBECA RODRIGUEZ  
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

SAN ANTONIO — A cluster of apparent cases of Lou Gehrig's disease has surfaced among former employees of Kelly Air Force Base, leading some to speculate whether years of contamination at the high-profile military base could have caused the deadly disease.

Preliminary studies have identified 127 former workers who have the deadly neuromuscular disease or have died from it between 1938 and 2000. There is still no clear connection to Kelly Air Force Base, which closed

### DISEASE

An investigation is under way to determine if contamination at a San Antonio military base caused some workers to develop a neuromuscular disease.

July 13 and is now a business development known as Kelly USA, but the numbers are high enough to warrant an investigation, officials say.

A study is being conducted by the Air Force, the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, the Texas Department of Health and the South Texas chapter of the Amyotrophic Lateral

Sclerosis Association. ALS is the medical term for the disease commonly called Lou Gehrig's disease since the 1930s, when the former New York Yankees star became a high-profile victim of the malady.

"We have to do any studies that are needed," said U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio. "The government has a history of saying, 'No, no, no' for decades with things like Agent Orange and Gulf War syndrome. If we find any pattern with [ALS], we need to do everything to

More on DISEASE on 2B

## Sanchez decides against debates

### DEBATES

An aide to the candidate cites recent attacks by Dan Morales, his leading opponent in the Democratic gubernatorial primary.

By JOHN MORITZ

STAR-TELEGRAM AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ken Sanchez late Saturday pulled out of any debates with rival Dan Morales, saying through an aide that the former attorney general is running an underhanded campaign and not to be trusted.

"He has attacked the Sanchez family, shown a complete disregard for the truth, and earned a reputation as someone who depends more on deception and trickery than honest, open discussion," Sanchez campaign manager Glenn Smith said Saturday.

The two camps have been at odds over debates ever since Morales' surprise decision in January to challenge the Laredo billionaire for the Democratic nomination for governor. Morales called for as many as six one-on-one matchups with Sanchez, saying that the televised confrontations would give him the exposure a low-budget campaign could otherwise afford.

Sanchez, who spent more than \$4.3 million last month to launch a series of upbeat TV commercials in advance of the March 11 primary, had insisted on just one debate — one of them in Austin.

Smith said any chance of the two sharing a stage vanished.

More on DEBATES

## Treatment via video aids the homeless

### TELEMEDICINE

Critics say psychiatric treatment via videoconferencing offers little human connection, can



## Mother bears pain but keeps her faith

Another January. Another devastating loss for a mother who should not have to bear much more pain.

It is the third January, in fact, that this mother has lost a child to a violent act.

### SANDERS

Through a series of tragedies, faith in God sustains a South Oak Cliff woman.

Hollins,



## DISEASE

Continued from 1B

find out how that came about and how to prevent it."

In December, the House Veterans Affairs Committee released a report indicating that Persian Gulf War veterans contracted ALS at nearly twice the rate of nondeployed veterans. Those afflicted veterans are now pushing to receive benefits because of their illness.

If a similar link can be established between ALS and employment at the base, Rodriguez says, Kelly workers should also get assistance.

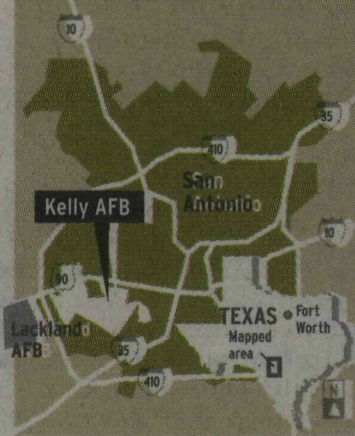
ALS is a fatal disease that attacks the neuromuscular system. Motor nerve cells stop functioning and die, leading to loss of muscle control, paralysis and death within a few years.

Scientists have not found a cause for the disease, and only a small percentage of cases have genetic roots. About 30,000 people in the United States have ALS.

The condition ravages the body, sometimes causing slurred speech, loss of hand control and difficulty walking, swallowing, chewing, and, eventually, breathing. There is no cure, and the life expectancy of an ALS patient is two to five years after diagnosis.

All the while, the mind remains lucid, making the

## Possible links to ALS cases



STAR-TELEGRAM/DON COOK

patient's body a virtual prison. In the meantime, insurance can run out, and care for an ALS patient can cost \$200,000 a year or more, said Mary Klenke, director of patient services for the ALS South Texas Chapter in San Antonio.

"The devastation that this disease causes isn't just for the individuals, it's for the entire family," Klenke said.

### Handling toxic chemicals

Norman Lloyd's speech is slurred and drawn out. He cannot walk without help and has lost control of his bowels. He is sharpest early in the day and tires in the afternoons. His wife of 53 years, Joyce, is never far from his side.

For more than three decades, Norman Lloyd worked at Kelly Air Force Base, which closed on July 13



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/JOE MITCHELL

Norman and Joyce Lloyd, shown outside their home in Bandera, believe that loose guidelines for handling waste at Kelly Air Force Base may be responsible for Norman Lloyd's case of Lou Gehrig's disease.

"It was a good place to work, but they always said it cost too much to get proper equipment to keep us safe."

—Norman Lloyd, a former Kelly employee with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

and is being revitalized as an aerospace business park called Kelly USA. He began in 1956 as a sheet metal technician working on B-52s, then went on to work on air compressors and air conditioners. For about the last 20 years of his career there, he worked in the industrial waste division.

Each day, Lloyd and his colleagues came into contact with a stew of toxic chemicals. He still remembers many of the ingredients: cyanide, hexavalent chromium, phenol, nitric acid, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid and chlorine.

He also worked with cobalt-60 and other radioactive materials, he said.

"We treated those chemicals three or four times a week and we were exposed to some of those toxic fumes all the time," he said. "At first we didn't have anything but an apron, rubber gloves and a dust mask. We had air bags

and gas masks for backup when we treated chlorine, but we didn't use them but once."

Sometimes there wasn't enough material to work with, so it would be stored until there was enough to treat, he said.

"It was a good place to work, but they always said it cost too much to get proper equipment to keep us safe," Lloyd said.

In the mid-1980s, Lloyd began having trouble walking. He would trip and lose his balance. Although he had not reached retirement age, he decided to retire in 1988.

In 1994, Lloyd had a thorough medical examination. Months later, he received the devastating news: he had Lou Gehrig's disease.

"I didn't know anything about" the disease, Lloyd said.

Norman and Joyce Lloyd are now part of the Air Force's study, although they have not received the 90-page ques-

tionnaire being distributed to ALS patients and their families.

The delay adds one more level of frustration for the family.

"They're very slow in doing anything. All these poor people..." Joyce Lloyd said.

Norman Lloyd has lived more than seven years since doctors diagnosed his ALS — longer than most with the disease.

He is not angry, but he said something needs to be done if the study reveals a connection between Kelly and the ALS cases.

"I believe it was the chemicals at Kelly [that caused my ALS]," Lloyd said. "I think [the Air Force] ought to do something about it, some compensation or something."

Joyce Lloyd agrees. "You can't help but feel resentful," she said. "He looked forward to retiring and doing a lot of things around the house, and now he just can't."

### Lax controls

In 1916, Kelly Air Force Base was little more than a small landing strip known as Kelly Field. By the 1920s, Kelly had expanded into a major supply and repair station. As the United States was being drawn into World War II, Congress authorized \$300 million to strengthen the Army Air Corps, and the number of aircraft maintenance workers at the base blossomed from about 1,100 to more than 20,000.

In 1948, the complex was renamed Kelly Air Force Base and remained a major air logistics center for the next half-century. Workers that refurbished and retrofitted aircraft often used chemical solvents, said Sam Sanchez, environmental health administrator for the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District.

This was before strict environmental regulations were in place, Sanchez said.

"Over the years, many of those solvents were mislabeled, and there was a lot of spillage," he said. "For most part people would make a hole and put the chemicals in there and cover it with dirt and go about their business."

Mother Nature would take the rest, it was thought.

"In the past, we expected dilution frequently to take care of things," said Kenneth Cox, an epidemiologist with Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio. "It was OK to dump things in the water because it would get flushed out. It was just a prevailing practice."

Cox said the Air Force was not alone in the way it posed of waste. Industry generally engaged in disposal practices that now seem egregious, he said.

Contamination problems at Kelly first came to light in the late 1980s, when residents near the base were petitioning to get a drainage project for their neighborhood, Sanchez said.

The city began excavating a piece of Quintana Road, which runs next to the base, and found an underground pool of jet fuel.

The volatile fumes sickened workers, and many residents complained of dizziness, headaches and other problems, Sanchez said.

Officials have since discovered a 10-square-mile chemical plume beneath parts of the Kelly neighborhood. The Air Force has spent more than \$100 million to clean up contamination near Kelly, a process that will take two to three decades.

Rodriguez said he has a personal stake in the cleanup because he lives in the area where the plume is.

In 1996, the late Congressman Frank Tejeda, D-San Antonio, asked the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to conduct a public health assessment of the Kelly area.

The agency, which is part of the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, found slightly elevated levels of some birth defects and some cancers, especially liver cancer.

But the report did not find any specific links to contamination near the base. Nor was a correlation with ALS found during the first two phases of the study.

That might be because the agency looked at people living near Kelly, a population that may or may not include Kelly workers, Sanchez said.

He said there are thousands of populations that can be studied: people who worked at Kelly and lived near the base, people who worked at Kelly and did not live near the base, and people who never worked at Kelly but lived near the base.

If ALS has any connection with people who worked at the base, the toxic substance study would not have found it.

Cox said there are many factors to consider. Hispanics, for example, have a higher incidence of some cancers than non-Hispanics.

The area near Kelly Air Force Base is predominantly Hispanic and lower-middle class.

In addition to the current ALS study, the Air Force also contracted out a mortality study of the Kelly workforce since 1981.

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sculptor, on Saturday at Ridgmar Mall. The shopping mall held a weekend art festival featuring local galleries, artists and museums.



Star-Telegram/ALISON WOODWORTH

## SANDERS

From Page 1B

fact that he was not just Harlem's representative; he was a congressman for all of black America.

And even though he was referred to as "The Rev. Adam Clayton Powell," I never got the impression that he was confused about his role of minister vs. his title as United States representative.

I had the feeling that despite his dual roles as a servant of God and representative of country, he clearly understood the concept "separation

of church and state."

The folk in the House of Representatives could use a little of that understanding.

We need some serious discussion about faith and government.

No, I did not say faith *in* government. I said, faith *and* government.

With all the talk in Washington these days about "faith-based" initiatives and the federal funding of such programs, it is imperative that we first talk about (or at least think about) the Constitution.

Well, while you think about it, let me get right to the point:

The United States government should keep its nose and its hands

out of religious organizations' business, and religious organizations should keep their hands out of the government's pocket.

I think that would please God and the founders of our republic.

Yet, we have a president who tries to make us believe that while government should stay out of much of our lives, it ought to be funding that part of our human obligation that helps redeem our souls.

Last week, the House of Representatives passed the president's plan for getting federal dollars into the collection plates of religious groups.

The Community Solutions Act was complete with an exemption that

would let recipients of these funds practice discrimination in hiring.

That in itself should be reason enough for the Senate to reject this idea. The legislation passed by the House might be better called The Community Pollution Act since it certainly would pollute principles outlined in the Constitution of the United States.

Religious organizations are supposed to do good works in their communities. After all, most religions teach that one serves God by serving people.

We are fortunate in our communities that there are many religious organizations doing just that, spend-

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# Closing of Kelly Air Force Base ends an era

By MICHELLE KOIDIN  
The Associated Press

**SAN ANTONIO** — Oralia Nieto was a high school-educated secretary and single mom when she was offered a job at Kelly Air Force Base in 1981.

Two decades later, she left the soon-to-be-closed base as a college-educated inventory manager making \$46,000 a year. Along the way, she put her daughter through college, too.

No wonder "Viva Kelly!" became a familiar cry in San Antonio's Hispanic neighborhoods.

But no chant or plea could sway the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

Now the end has arrived.

Eighty-five years after it opened, six years after it was ordered closed, the base that served the country in five wars and served Hispanics in their own war for a better life has been shut down for good. Kelly's flag was brought down during a formal military ceremony on July 13.

"I came to Kelly because it offered me upward mobility," said Nieto, who now has gone back to school to become a medical office assistant, which she expects to pay about half her Kelly salary. "It offered me an opportu-

nity to get out of secretarial work."

"Kelly," said Nieto, 53, "was real good to me."

Hispanics who lived near the base on the city's southwest side echo the sentiments.

"Whole neighborhoods owed their vitality to the breadwinners' salaries at Kelly," said former Mayor Henry Cisneros, who grew up on the west side and went on to serve as housing secretary in the first Clinton administration.

"Kelly was the principal reason for the fact that there emerged a Hispanic middle class," he said. "It performed the role the auto industry did for the black community in Detroit — the underpinning of a middle-class life."

At the time Kelly was ordered closed by the independent commission in 1995, about 60 percent of its workers were Hispanic, Air Force spokesman Mike Kucharek said. Forty-five percent of all Hispanics employed by the Air Force worked at Kelly.

The depot not only was the biggest of San Antonio's four Air Force bases but the city's largest employer. At its peak in 1945, Kelly employed about 31,000 people. At the height of the Vietnam War, 26,300 people worked there.

When the closure order came, Kelly

employed about 10,400 civilians and 2,300 military personnel.

Workers at Kelly, the oldest continuously operating Air Force base, maintained huge C-5 Galaxy cargo planes and serviced or cataloged about half of the engines in the Air Force, for F-15 and F-16 fighter jets, C-130 transport planes, T-38 training jets and others.

After the closure announcement, the Air Force shifted work to other depots, let workers go in four waves and turned buildings over to a redevelopment agency created by the city.

"We continued to provide parts to Bosnia and the whole Balkans war effort," said Tommy Jordan, an Air Force official who oversaw the base closing. "Until we moved the workload to another depot, we had the responsibility of continuing to support the operational Air Force."

About 2,000 Kelly workers followed their jobs to depots in Georgia, Oklahoma, Utah and New Mexico, Jordan said. Another 1,800 or so went to work for other Defense Department agencies, mainly in San Antonio. About 800 people were laid off. Others retired or started their own businesses.

Hundreds of others have landed jobs at the aviation and high-tech busi-

ness park that has taken over the base. Since 1996, the City Council-formed Greater Kelly Development Authority has attracted 37 companies to the park, now called KellyUSA, and created 4,500 jobs.

The agency has not tracked how many former Kelly workers have been hired but has sent out a survey to count them, spokeswoman Teresa Nino said.

Lockheed Martin Corp., for one, has about 940 Kelly civilian workers among its 1,400-person work force.

Jordan estimated that about half of the new jobs have gone to former Kelly workers.

Paul Roberson, executive director for the development authority, said he hopes to create a total of 21,000 "good-paying" jobs by 2006 — jobs that would pay at least \$9 to \$10 an hour, or \$18,700 to \$20,800 a year and up.

Some had believed there would be more opportunities for former Kelly workers by this point.

"I'm disappointed with how it has turned out because I don't see the jobs that were promised to the local people in the numbers that were promised," said Maria Antonietta Berriozabal, who was a city councilwoman for 10 years.



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## EPA fuels suspicions of Kelly assurances

By Gary Martin

Express-News Washington Bureau

Web Posted : 06/24/2001

WASHINGTON — Conflicting assessments of chemical contamination in and around Kelly AFB have raised concerns about the potential threat to San Antonio's primary source of drinking water, the Edwards Aquifer.

The Air Force maintains a 12-square-mile plume of contaminants in the shallow water table beneath the base poses minimal risk to the deeper Edwards, because it is shielded by a 1,000-foot barrier of clay and limestone.

This month, the federal Environmental Protection Agency cast doubt on that determination when it moved to place the abandoned R&H Oil Co. refinery, adjacent to the base, on its list of Superfund cleanup sites.

Notwithstanding the barrier of clay and limestone, the EPA said deteriorating well casings could serve as a conduit for the chemicals to reach the pristine waters below.

The Kelly pollutants consist primarily of the chlorinated solvents perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene, both of which can cause liver and kidney damage.

An EPA document says water samples taken at the seven-acre abandoned refinery site found benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc.

Those pollutants, the EPA says, "threaten nearby municipal water wells used by the city of San Antonio."

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#### Comments

Send comments about this section to online editor [Crystal Coleman](#).

"I'm concerned about the contradictory statement by the EPA that the Edwards is threatened, because I don't believe it is," said David Newman, environmental manager for the city of San Antonio.

Others are skeptical of the Air Force and its approach toward potential pollution of the aquifer from Kelly.

On July 13, the 85-year-old base will be decommissioned and turned over to the city of San Antonio, which is developing the former aircraft maintenance center into an industrial park.

"The Department of Defense is going to do the least that they can," Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, said of the cleanup effort. "It's up to the community to look at it and do the right thing."

"We have an obligation and responsibility that we do everything so that in five years, we don't find that we did pollute the aquifer."

The skepticism comes as the Air Force is considering six scenarios to clean the shallow groundwater off base. The plans cost from \$5 million to \$32 million, and would be conducted over 15 to 19 years.

As it moves forward with community input, the city of San Antonio is asking for an independent assessment of the groundwater pollution.

Mayor Ed Garza said that regardless of which agency's assessment is correct, the bottom line for the community is that "we are going to hold the federal government responsible for remediation."

"I don't think anyone knows the real answer," Garza said. "We need to hold the Air Force accountable and develop a timeline to clean up the neighborhoods around Kelly in a timely fashion."

Thus far, San Antonio and the state of Texas have monitored Air Force actions, and backed the military's claim that the groundwater pollution poses little risk of contamination to the city's drinking water.

But the EPA stands behind its assessment that petroleum-based wastes from the deteriorating refinery have polluted the shallow water table and could migrate to nearby wells and contaminate the

Edwards.

And because the R&H Oil Co. site sits in the path of the Kelly chemical plume, many believe the same risk to the Edwards applies for the solvents running from the military base and under 18,000 South Side homes.

"We are more than familiar with the Department of Defense stance on the plume and the threat to the aquifer," said Dave Bary, an EPA spokesman in Dallas.

However, he reiterated that the agency believes "a threat to the Edwards has been demonstrated."

Jackie Hardee of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, which is being paid by the Defense Department to monitor the cleanup, said tests show no contamination in the Edwards near Kelly.

She agreed with the Air Force that the geology under the military base makes it difficult for chemical migration to reach the aquifer.

And Scott Halty with the San Antonio Water System said tests would continue to monitor for contamination.

"I don't think there is a feared threat from all of this," Halty said.

Armando Quintanilla, 72, a former South Side resident who has monitored the groundwater pollution and cleanup at Kelly, said the EPA assessment is the latest piece of information to undermine the Air Force's approach to remove the contamination.

"How can they say the refinery, a stone's throw from Kelly, is a threat to the aquifer and that Kelly is not? I don't buy that," said Quintanilla, a member of the Restoration Advisory Board that reports to the Air Force on the Kelly contamination.

"I am frustrated with our government, with our Air Force. They haven't been nice to us; they haven't been good neighbors. They haven't done anything to help us, and that's wrong. The government contaminated the water."

William Ryan of the Air Force Base Conversion Agency disagreed.

"We have done a lot of work to address contamination at Kelly. It's a complex issue, it takes a lot of money and it takes time to get the right systems in place," Ryan said.

The Air Force has spent about \$235 million to date on environmental cleanup at the base.

More than \$450 million will be needed to bring the former military facility, where jet engines were repaired and paint was stripped from aging cargo craft, into compliance with environmental laws.

Despite the promises, Rodriguez and other South Side officials say their fears are heightened because the Air Force was slow to confirm the finding of contaminants in Edwards water wells in the 1980s.

In 1986 and 1989, samples from a supply well at Kelly found trichloroethylene, a solvent used at the military base and the principal contaminant in the shallow water table.

The well was plugged in 1991. But water samples collected in 1995 again found trichloroethylene and other contaminants in five other wells, according to the Edwards Aquifer Authority, the agency established by the state Legislature to monitor the vast underground resource.

In a July 2000 letter, Gregory Ellis, Edwards Aquifer Authority general manager, noted that several hundred feet of "low permeable" soil as well as the gradient help protect the drinking water from contamination above.

"However, improperly abandoned wells or wells with deteriorated casing in the vicinity of Kelly AFB are potential conduits for contaminated shallow groundwater to enter the Edwards Aquifer," Ellis wrote.

The area of contamination contains various drinking water wells operated by the Bexar County Metropolitan Water District, known locally as Bexar Met.

Some are near Kelly and R&H Oil Co., said Chuck



Aherns, Bexar Met water resources manager.

While Aherns said the likelihood of contamination through the wells is small, "you can't be too careful when you're dealing with public water supply."

"Things don't always do underground what you think they are doing," Aherns said.

In the EPA risk assessment of the R&H Oil Co. site, government scientists described the Edwards as a Karst aquifer, the type that is "susceptible to the natural creation of underground cavities and channels and, as such, are extremely vulnerable to contaminant migration."

Contaminants from R&H Oil Co. are petroleum based, unlike the trichloroethylene from Kelly.


The Air Force has held seven public meetings on its cleanup plans, and has met more than 100 times with specific groups to determine the proper remedy for cleanup.

Rodriguez said he has scheduled a meeting with the EPA to talk about the risk of pollution to the aquifer, and plans to talk with the TNRCC about the Air Force cleanup.

"I don't want to hear about contamination in 10 years, when it's too late," Rodriguez said.

*[gmartin@express-news.net](mailto:gmartin@express-news.net)*

06/24/2001

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Monday | June 25, 2001

## Texas & Southwest



### Water pollution concern raised

#### Air Force says risk to San Antonio small

06/25/2001

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO – Concerns are being raised about the potential threat to the Edwards Aquifer in the wake of conflicting assessments of chemical contamination in and around soon-to-be-decommissioned Kelly Air Force Base.

The Air Force says that a 12-square-mile plume of contaminants in the shallow water table beneath the base poses minimal risk to the deeper Edwards because it is shielded by a 1,000-foot barrier of clay and limestone.

This month, the federal Environmental Protection Agency cast doubt on that determination by putting the abandoned R&H Oil Co. refinery on its list of Superfund cleanup sites. The refinery is next to the base.

The aquifer is San Antonio's primary source of drinking water.

Kelly's pollutants consist primarily of the chlorinated solvents perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene, both of which can cause liver and kidney damage.

An EPA document says water samples taken at the 7-acre abandoned refinery site found benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc. Those pollutants, the EPA says, "threaten nearby municipal water wells used by the city of San Antonio."

"I'm concerned about the contradictory statement by the EPA that the Edwards is threatened, because I don't believe it is," David Newman, environmental manager for the city, said in a report published Sunday in *San Antonio Express-News*.

Others are skeptical of the Air Force and its approach

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Others are skeptical of the Air Force and its approach toward potential pollution of the aquifer from Kelly.

"The Department of Defense is going to do the least that they can," U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, said of the cleanup effort. "It's up to the community to look at it and do the right thing. We have an obligation and responsibility that we do everything so that in five years, we don't find that we did pollute the aquifer."

On July 13, the 85-year-old base will be decommissioned and turned over to San Antonio, which is developing the former aircraft maintenance center into an industrial park.

The Air Force is considering six scenarios to clean the groundwater. The plans cost from \$5 million to \$32 million and would be conducted over 15 to 19 years.

The city, meanwhile, is requesting an independent assessment of the groundwater pollution.

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 2000, 1999 Katie winner for best news-related Web site  
 2000 (tie), 1999, 1998 best online newspaper in the state / Texas Associated Press Managing Editors Award

FROM NEWS 5 AND THE SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

NEWS

## EPA throws doubt on 'natural' cleanup

San Antonio Express-News

**Web Posted : 06/23/2001**

The Environmental Protection Agency has cast serious doubt on the Air Force's longstanding contention that contaminated shallow aquifers near Kelly AFB are not a serious threat to San Antonio's drinking water.

In documents recommending a defunct oil company and gasoline refinery near Kelly be added to the national list of Superfund cleanup sites, the EPA said the Edwards is one of many aquifers that are "susceptible to the natural creation of underground cavities and channels, and, as such, are extremely vulnerable to contaminant migration."

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State environmental officials approved the EPA's move.

The proposed Superfund site, the former R&H Oil Co., sits atop shallow groundwater also polluted by Kelly.

EPA spokesman Dave Bary told the Express-News, "The contaminants we have identified at the site pose a threat to the Edwards Aquifer."

Air Force officials have consistently argued that while the shallow aquifers on the South Side were contaminated, the Edwards was not at significant risk because a thick layer of clay and rock protected it from the shallow water.

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The EPA statement directly contradicts Kelly's position.

One federal agency says there is not a serious risk. Another says there is.

The situation raises health concerns for all San Antonio and other Edwards Aquifer users.

And the EPA stance erodes any remaining confidence in the wisdom of the Air Force's desire to let nature clean up the pollution in the shallow aquifers over a period of 20 years or so.

If the Edwards Aquifer is at risk from the shallow groundwater pollution, then the contamination should be cleaned up as quickly and thoroughly as possible.

06/23/2001

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Beverly Negri

06/25/2001 12:02 PM

To: Laura Stankosky/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc: Zana Halliday/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Lisa Price/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Betty Williamson/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Jennifer Lyke/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

Subject: Austin American-Statesman Article (Kelly AFB)

Monday, June 25

EPA, military differ on  
pollution threat to Edwards  
Aquifer

Associated Press  
Monday, June 25, 2001

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An EPA document says water samples taken at the 7-acre abandoned refinery site found benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc. Those pollutants, the EPA says, "threaten nearby municipal water wells used by the city of San Antonio."

"I'm concerned about the contradictory statement by the EPA that the Edwards is threatened, because I don't believe it is," David Newman, environmental manager for the city, said in a report published in Sunday's San Antonio Express-News.

Others are skeptical of the Air Force and its approach toward potential pollution of the aquifer from Kelly.

"The Department of Defense is going to do the least that they can," U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, said of the cleanup effort. "It's up to the community to look at it and do the right thing. We have an obligation and responsibility that we do everything so that in five years, we don't find that

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The Air Force is considering six scenarios to clean the shallow ground water off base. The plans cost from \$5 million to \$32 million and would be conducted over 15 to 19 years.

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"I don't think anyone knows the real answer," Garza said. "We need to hold the Air Force accountable and develop a timeline to clean up the neighborhoods around Kelly in a timely fashion."

Jackie Hardee of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, which is being paid by the Defense Department to monitor the cleanup, said tests show no contamination in the Edwards near Kelly.

She agreed with the Air Force that the geology under the military base makes it difficult for chemical migration to reach the aquifer.

Thus far, San Antonio and the State of Texas have monitored Air Force actions and backed the military's contention that the ground-water pollution poses little risk.



**Beverly Negri**

06/25/2001 11:40 AM

To: Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Amber Howard/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
cc: Zana Halliday/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Betty Williamson/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
Subject: EPA throws doubt on 'natural' cleanup (San Antonio Express-News editorial)

FYI



**Cynthia Fanning**

06/25/01 10:56 AM

To: David Neleigh/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Laura Stankosky/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Lisa Price/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Brenda Cook/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Beverly Negri/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, David Bary/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
cc:  
Subject: EPA throws doubt on 'natural' cleanup (San Antonio Express-News editorial)

#### Editorial

EPA throws doubt on 'natural' cleanup ; Environmental Protection Agency officials say the Edwards Aquifer is at risk from pollution near Kelly.

06/23/2001

San Antonio Express-News

Metro

Page 10B

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cc: Zana Halliday/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Lisa Price/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Betty Williamson/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Jennifer Lyke/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

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**Beverly Negri**

06/25/2001 12:07 PM

To: Amber Howard/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 cc: Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gary Moore/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, I-Jung Chiang/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Donn Walters/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 Subject: Re: Express News Article R&H - Kelly

Amber,  
 Donn Walters will be attending the meeting. I'm going to an Ascarco meeting and Betty is attending a Kelly meeting at the same time.

Beverly  
 Amber Howard



**Amber Howard**

06/25/01 11:00 AM

To: Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 cc: Gary Moore/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, I-Jung Chiang/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Beverly Negri/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 Subject: Re: Express News Article R&H - Kelly

FYI - I have all four R&H Oil articles that have been in the Express-News. I have made copies and will distribute them at today's meeting.

Laura, FYI, we're having an R&H meeting today from 2 - 3 in Bill Honker's conference room on 10. You're welcome to join.  
 Chris Villarreal

**Chris Villarreal**

06/25/01 10:41 AM

To: Amber Howard/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, I-Jung Chiang/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gary Moore/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 cc:  
 Subject: Express News Article R&H - Kelly

FYI

----- Forwarded by Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US on 06/25/01 10:39 AM -----



**Laura Stankosky**

06/25/01 09:36 AM

To: David Neleigh/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, David Bary/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Brenda Cook/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 cc:  
 Subject: Express News Article

----- Forwarded by Laura Stankosky/R6/USEPA/US on 06/25/01 09:36 AM -----



**William Ryan**

<wpryan@swbell.net>  
 >

06/24/01 06:43 PM

To: William Ryan <wpryan@swbell.net>, David Newman <dnewman@ci.sat.tx.us>, Mark Weegar <MWEEGAR@tnrcc.state.tx.us>, Lisa Price/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Abbi Power <apower@tnrcc.state.tx.us>, Laura Stankosky/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc:  
Subject: Express News Article

This was in Sunday's paper.  
wpr

EPA fuels suspicions of Kelly assurances

By Gary Martin  
Express-News Washington Bureau

Web Posted : 06/24/2001

WASHINGTON — Conflicting assessments of chemical contamination in and around Kelly AFB have raised concerns about the potential threat to San Antonio's primary source of drinking water, the Edwards Aquifer.

The Air Force maintains a 12-square-mile plume of contaminants in the shallow water table beneath the base poses minimal risk to the deeper Edwards, because it is shielded by a 1,000-foot barrier of clay and limestone.

This month, the federal Environmental Protection Agency cast doubt on that determination when it moved to place the abandoned R&H Oil Co. refinery, adjacent to the base, on its list of Superfund cleanup sites.

Notwithstanding the barrier of clay and limestone, the EPA said deteriorating well casings could serve as a conduit for the chemicals to reach the pristine waters below.

The Kelly pollutants consist primarily of the chlorinated solvents perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene, both of which can cause liver and kidney damage.

An EPA document says water samples taken at the seven-acre abandoned refinery site found benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc.

Those pollutants, the EPA says, "threaten nearby municipal water wells used by the city of San Antonio."

"I'm concerned about the contradictory statement by the EPA that the Edwards is threatened, because I don't believe it is," said David Newman, environmental manager for the city of San Antonio.

Others are skeptical of the Air Force and its approach toward potential pollution of the aquifer from Kelly.

On July 13, the 85-year-old base will be decommissioned and turned over to the city of San Antonio, which is developing the former aircraft maintenance center into an industrial park.

"The Department of Defense is going to do the least that they can," Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, said of the cleanup effort. "It's up to the community to look at it and do the right thing."

"We have an obligation and responsibility that we do everything so that in five years, we don't find that we did pollute the aquifer."

The skepticism comes as the Air Force is considering six scenarios to clean the shallow groundwater off



base. The plans cost from \$5 million to \$32 million, and would be conducted over 15 to 19 years.

As it moves forward with community input, the city of San Antonio is asking for an independent assessment of the groundwater pollution.

Mayor Ed Garza said that regardless of which agency's assessment is correct, the bottom line for the community is that "we are going to hold the federal government responsible for remediation."

"I don't think anyone knows the real answer," Garza said. "We need to hold the Air Force accountable and develop a timeline to clean up the neighborhoods around Kelly in a timely fashion."

Thus far, San Antonio and the state of Texas have monitored Air Force actions, and backed the military's claim that the groundwater pollution poses little risk of contamination to the city's drinking water.

But the EPA stands behind its assessment that petroleum-based wastes from the deteriorating refinery have polluted the shallow water table and could migrate to nearby wells and contaminate the Edwards.

And because the R&H Oil Co. site sits in the path of the Kelly chemical plume, many believe the same risk to the Edwards applies for the solvents running from the military base and under 18,000 South Side homes.

"We are more than familiar with the Department of Defense stance on the plume and the threat to the aquifer," said Dave Bary, an EPA spokesman in Dallas.

However, he reiterated that the agency believes "a threat to the Edwards has been demonstrated."

Jackie Hardee of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, which is being paid by the Defense Department to monitor the cleanup, said tests show no contamination in the Edwards near Kelly.

She agreed with the Air Force that the geology under the military base makes it difficult for chemical migration to reach the aquifer.

And Scott Halty with the San Antonio Water System said tests would continue to monitor for contamination.

"I don't think there is a feared threat from all of this," Halty said.

Armando Quintanilla, 72, a former South Side resident who has monitored the groundwater pollution and cleanup at Kelly, said the EPA assessment is the latest piece of information to undermine the Air Force's approach to remove the contamination.

"How can they say the refinery, a stone's throw from Kelly, is a threat to the aquifer and that Kelly is not? I don't buy that," said Quintanilla, a member of the Restoration Advisory Board that reports to the Air Force on the Kelly contamination.

"I am frustrated with our government, with our Air Force. They haven't been nice to us; they haven't been good neighbors. They haven't done anything to help us, and that's wrong. The government contaminated the water."

William Ryan of the Air Force Base Conversion Agency disagreed.

"We have done a lot of work to address contamination at Kelly. It's a complex issue, it takes a lot of

money and it takes time to get the right systems in place," Ryan said.

The Air Force has spent about \$235 million to date on environmental cleanup at the base.

More than \$450 million will be needed to bring the former military facility, where jet engines were repaired and paint was stripped from aging cargo craft, into compliance with environmental laws.

Despite the promises, Rodriguez and other South Side officials say their fears are heightened because the Air Force was slow to confirm the finding of contaminants in Edwards water wells in the 1980s.

In 1986 and 1989, samples from a supply well at Kelly found trichloroethylene, a solvent used at the military base and the principal contaminant in the shallow water table.

The well was plugged in 1991. But water samples collected in 1995 again found trichloroethylene and other contaminants in five other wells, according to the Edwards Aquifer Authority, the agency established by the state Legislature to monitor the vast underground resource.

In a July 2000 letter, Gregory Ellis, Edwards Aquifer Authority general manager, noted that several hundred feet of "low permeable" soil as well as the gradient help protect the drinking water from contamination above.

"However, improperly abandoned wells or wells with deteriorated casing in the vicinity of Kelly AFB are potential conduits for contaminated shallow groundwater to enter the Edwards Aquifer," Ellis wrote.

The area of contamination contains various drinking water wells operated by the Bexar County Metropolitan Water District, known locally as Bexar Met.

Some are near Kelly and R&H Oil Co., said Chuck Aherns, Bexar Met water resources manager.

While Aherns said the likelihood of contamination through the wells is small, "you can't be too careful when you're dealing with public water supply."

"Things don't always do underground what you think they are doing," Aherns said.

In the EPA risk assessment of the R&H Oil Co. site, government scientists described the Edwards as a Karst aquifer, the type that is "susceptible to the natural creation of underground cavities and channels and, as such, are extremely vulnerable to contaminant migration."

Contaminants from R&H Oil Co. are petroleum based, unlike the trichloroethylene from Kelly.

The Air Force has held seven public meetings on its cleanup plans, and has met more than 100 times with specific groups to determine the proper remedy for cleanup.

Rodriguez said he has scheduled a meeting with the EPA to talk about the risk of pollution to the aquifer, and plans to talk with the TNRCC about the Air Force cleanup.

"I don't want to hear about contamination in 10 years, when it's too late," Rodriguez said.

[gmartin@express-news.net](mailto:gmartin@express-news.net)

06/24/2001

----- Original Message -----

**From:** William Ryan

**To:** David Newman ; Mark Weegar ; Lisa Price ; Abbi Power ; Laura Stankosky

**Sent:** Saturday, June 23, 2001 8:58 AM

Looks like this was from the Gary Martin phone calls.

wpr

Express-News: Editorials

EPA throws doubt on 'natural' cleanup

San Antonio Express-News

Web Posted : 06/23/2001

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06/23/2001

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Monday | June 25, 2001

# Texas & Southwest



## Water pollution concern raised

### Air Force says risk to San Antonio small

06/25/2001

Associated Press

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2000 (tie), 1999, 1998 best online newspaper in the state / Texas Associated Press Managing Editors Award



**Amber Howard**

06/25/2001 11:00 AM

To: Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 cc: Gary Moore/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, I-Jung Chiang/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Beverly Negri/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 Subject: Re: Express News Article R&H - Kelly

FYI - I have all four R&H Oil articles that have been in the Express-News. I have made copies and will distribute them at today's meeting.

Laura, FYI, we're having an R&H meeting today from 2 - 3 in Bill Honker's conference room on 10. You're welcome to join.  
 Chris Villarreal

**Chris Villarreal**

06/25/01 10:41 AM

To: Amber Howard/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, I-Jung Chiang/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gary Moore/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
 cc:  
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06/25/01 09:36 AM

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 cc:  
 Subject: Express News Article

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 <wpryan@swbell.net>  
 >

06/24/01 06:43 PM

To: William Ryan <wpryan@swbell.net>, David Newman <dnewman@ci.sat.tx.us>, Mark Weegar <MWEEGAR@tnrcc.state.tx.us>, Lisa Price/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Abbi Power <apower@tnrcc.state.tx.us>, Laura Stankosky/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
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 Express-News Washington Bureau

Web Posted : 06/24/2001

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06/24/2001

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**From:** William Ryan

**To:** David Newman ; Mark Weegar ; Lisa Price ; Abbi Power ; Laura Stankosky

**Sent:** Saturday, June 23, 2001 8:58 AM

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San Antonio Express-News



Web Posted : 06/23/2001

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#### Comments

Send comments about this section to online editor Crystal Coleman.

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The Air Force has held seven public meetings on its cleanup plans, and has met more than 100 times with specific groups to determine the proper remedy for cleanup.

Rodriguez said he has scheduled a meeting with the EPA to talk about the risk of pollution to the aquifer, and plans to talk with the TNRCC about the Air Force cleanup.

"I don't want to hear about contamination in 10 years, when it's too late," Rodriguez said.

*[gmartin@express-news.net](mailto:gmartin@express-news.net)*

06/24/2001

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**Chris Villarreal**

06/14/2001 02:14 PM

To: Janice Bivens/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Gary Moore/R6/USEPA/US@EPA  
cc:

Subject: Superfund targets site near Kelly

----- Forwarded by Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US on 06/14/01 02:03 PM -----



**Beverly Negri**

06/14/01 11:06 AM

To: Brenda Cook/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Susan

Webster/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Chris Villarreal/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

cc: Lisa Price/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Betty

Williamson/R6/USEPA/US@EPA, Pam Phillips/R6/USEPA/US@EPA,

Gustavo Chavarria/R6/USEPA/US@EPA

Subject: Superfund targets site near Kelly

AND SO IT STARTS.....

Here's another story from the list coming out today. Another story will show up in this paper tomorrow, and Bloomberg is working on one for the wire now.

San Antonio Express-News: Nation & World

Superfund targets site near Kelly

By Gary Martin

Express-News washington bureau

Web Posted : 06/14/2001

WASHINGTON -- The Environmental Protection Agency will recommend today that the site of a defunct oil company and gasoline refinery near Kelly AFB be placed on its list of Superfund cleanup sites because of contamination that threatens groundwater used by the city of San Antonio.

EPA officials have received state approval to seek priority status under the Superfund program for the former R&H Oil Co., according to documents expected to be made public today.

The site is the first in Bexar County to land on the federal Superfund list.

The abandoned refinery, one of 10 sites in the country the EPA will recommend today, is within a mile of Kelly AFB, where Air Force officials are monitoring a plume of groundwater contamination following decades of industrial activity at the military base that is scheduled to close next month.

Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, applauded the EPA for taking the first step in cleaning up pollution caused by the former refinery and oil storage facility, but he stressed the efforts should not lessen the Defense Department's "responsibility to clean up the mess they have made" at Kelly.

Rodriguez said the chemical runoff from Kelly and R&H Oil threatens 18,000 South San Antonio homes above a shallow underground aquifer.

He said the contamination is harmful to health as well as to economic development.

According to the EPA, "A plume of petroleum hydrocarbon-contaminated ground water has been identified in the shallow alluvial aquifer beneath the R&H Oil Co. site."

The EPA has proposed the site for cleanup because "several spills and other releases of petroleum-related waste during facility operations has resulted in the contamination of shallow groundwater beneath the facility and threaten nearby municipal drinking water wells used by the city of San Antonio."

The EPA said that while the contaminated aquifer is not used as a water supply, "it is underlain by the Edwards Aquifer," which has been designated as San Antonio's sole source of drinking water.

The Edwards is one of many permeable aquifers "susceptible to the natural creation of underground cavities and channels and, as such, are extremely vulnerable to contaminant migration," the EPA wrote in a description of the site obtained by the San Antonio Express-News.

A gasoline blending facility established in 1938, R&H Oil Co. on Somerset Road changed hands over the years, operating as Eldorado Refining and Marketing and as Tropicana Energy Co. before it was abandoned "sometime after April 1989," the EPA document states.

Gasoline was refined at the facility until 1978, when it expanded to make specific fuels that contained other ingredients. In 1987, a portion of the acreage housed equipment to reprocess spent oils.

About 40 above-ground storage tanks and refining pipes remain on seven acres of land.

"Sludge and tar-like material has been observed around the tanks, and various chemicals have been found in the water, including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc," according to an EPA document.

An EPA official, who didn't want to be named, confirmed the R&H Oil Co. land would be on a list of 10 sites the federal agency is proposing for national priority status.

In a letter to the EPA, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission reviewed and signed off on the proposed cleanup of the San Antonio site. An official at the Texas agency referred questions to the EPA.

Listing the defunct San Antonio refinery for Superfund status will begin a 60-day public comment period and allow the federal agency to begin research and analysis to determine the cost and scope of cleanup.

"It's the final stage before getting there," the official said, warning that the process could take "up to two years" before cleanup begins.

The Superfund was created in 1980 to bring federal funding and aid to clean polluted areas. The Superfund is under the direction of the EPA. In some cases, the federal agency will seek reimbursement of cleanup efforts from responsible

parties.

State records indicate R&H Oil Co. had its charter forfeited in the early 1970s for failure to pay taxes. Tropicana Energy filed for bankruptcy protection in 1991. Company officials could not be reached Wednesday.

The former industrial complex sits within the 10 square miles of contaminated groundwater surrounding Kelly, where the Air Force is overseeing cleanup of contamination caused by decades of spills, leaks and the dumping of fuels and solvents.

Officials with the Air Force Base Conversion Agency estimate 98 percent of the pollution will be gone within 20 years. To date, the Air Force has spent \$235 million on cleanup, roughly half the projected cost.

While applauding the EPA action, Rodriguez said the "federal government has a long way to go to address the health concerns of residents near Kelly and former Kelly workers."

gmartin@express-news.net

Researcher Carolyn Edds contributed to this report.



blood.

When the number of impulses

Q: How many ICDs are im-

those emitted by magnetic resonance imaging scanners, or MRIs, and hand-held security wands.

**Montana: Virginia City** — The mysterious numbers associated with vigilantes who hanged 27 men in 1864 actually originated 15 years later with another vigilante movement, says journalist-historian Rick Allen. But he says no one knows for sure what the numbers 3-7-77 stand for. Montana Highway Patrol uniforms bear the numbers as a tribute to the "first people's police force."

**Nebraska: Columbus** — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scheduled a public meeting July 17 to discuss its plan to pump and dispose of groundwater contaminated with arsenic and other chemicals first discovered in 1983. However, the city hopes to persuade the EPA to store the contaminated water — as much as 1.5 million gallons per day — for uses other than drinking.

**Nevada: Reno** — Firefighters had nearly contained a 14,500-acre forest fire. The blaze had shut down Interstate 80 and a major rail line. More than \$16

**Ohio: Columbus** — Twenty-three students from Ohio's first cyberschool met their teachers and each other for the first time at their graduation ceremony Saturday. Since the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow charter school was founded last September, 2,700 children have enrolled, making it the state's largest charter school. Altogether, 32 students graduated this year.

**Oklahoma: Tulsa** — Oklahoma lacks a comprehensive way to track patterns of preventable deaths in nursing homes, according to an analysis of death certificates by the *Tulsa World*. The newspaper said nine residents of a nursing home in Broken Arrow died from bedsores between 1990 and 1999; eight patients died from malnutrition at a home in Tulsa. These patterns didn't prompt additional scrutiny from the state Department of Health, it said.

**Oregon: Coquille** — Former Coos County sheriff Mike Cook wants to lower the crime rate by requiring all home-

five-year graduation rates and ninth in first-to-second-year retention rates.

**Texas: San Antonio** — A chemical leaking from an Army base landfill has contaminated a portion of the Trinity Aquifer and could seep into the Edwards Aquifer, where it would threaten the drinking water supply of about 1.5 million people; officials said. Only a few hundred gallons of trichloroethene are believed to be responsible for the pollution at Camp Bullis Military Reservation.

**Utah: Ogden** — The American Medical Association and the Utah Medical Association are trying to mediate a dispute between an HMO and 15 doctors. After Intermountain Health Care refused to discuss a request by the doctors for an increase in their fees, the doctors left the group.

**Vermont: Montpelier** — Prison officials released an inmate four days early so they wouldn't have to defy a judge's order to give him methadone. Keith Griggs, jailed for 15 days for violating

enied enough pain medication awarded \$1.5 million / 26A

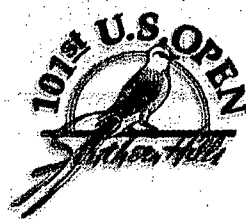


FRIDAY

JUNE 15, 2001 • METRO EDITION

## Hail, Hale

Irwin takes first-round lead of weather-shortened U.S. Open  
Sports/1D



# San Antonio Express-News

50¢

SERVING SOUTH TEXAS SINCE 1865

AVOIDING A THREAT TO SAN ANTONIO'S WATER

## Superfund campaign took 3 years



PHOTOS BY JERRY LARA/STAFF

Joe Soliz, a member of the Communities Organized for Public Service executive committee, leaves the R&H Oil Co. site Thursday.

## Refinery could be added to cleanup in 2 months



Irene Porter, 77, talks Thursday about her life in the neighborhood located near the former R&H Oil Co. The site has been targeted by the Environmental Protection Agency as a possible Superfund site.

By GARY MARTIN

EXPRESS-NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Nearly three years after state officials asked the federal government to help clean up an abandoned San Antonio refinery, the site — which could threaten the city's drinking water — may be just 60 days away from being added to the EPA's Superfund list.

The Environmental Protection Agency followed through with the request Thursday and proposed that the old R&H Oil Co., a seven-acre tract of storage tanks, become one of 10 new sites eligible for cleanup under the \$1.5 billion annual program.

EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman called the Superfund program a way to provide a "cleaner,

Site's neighbors are relieved/12A

safer future for our children."

She said cleanup sites remain a "top priority for the EPA, as well as the president."

Decades of refining, oil storage, spills and leaks of petroleum wastes at the San Antonio facility have polluted a shallow aquifer not used for drinking, the EPA said in documents.

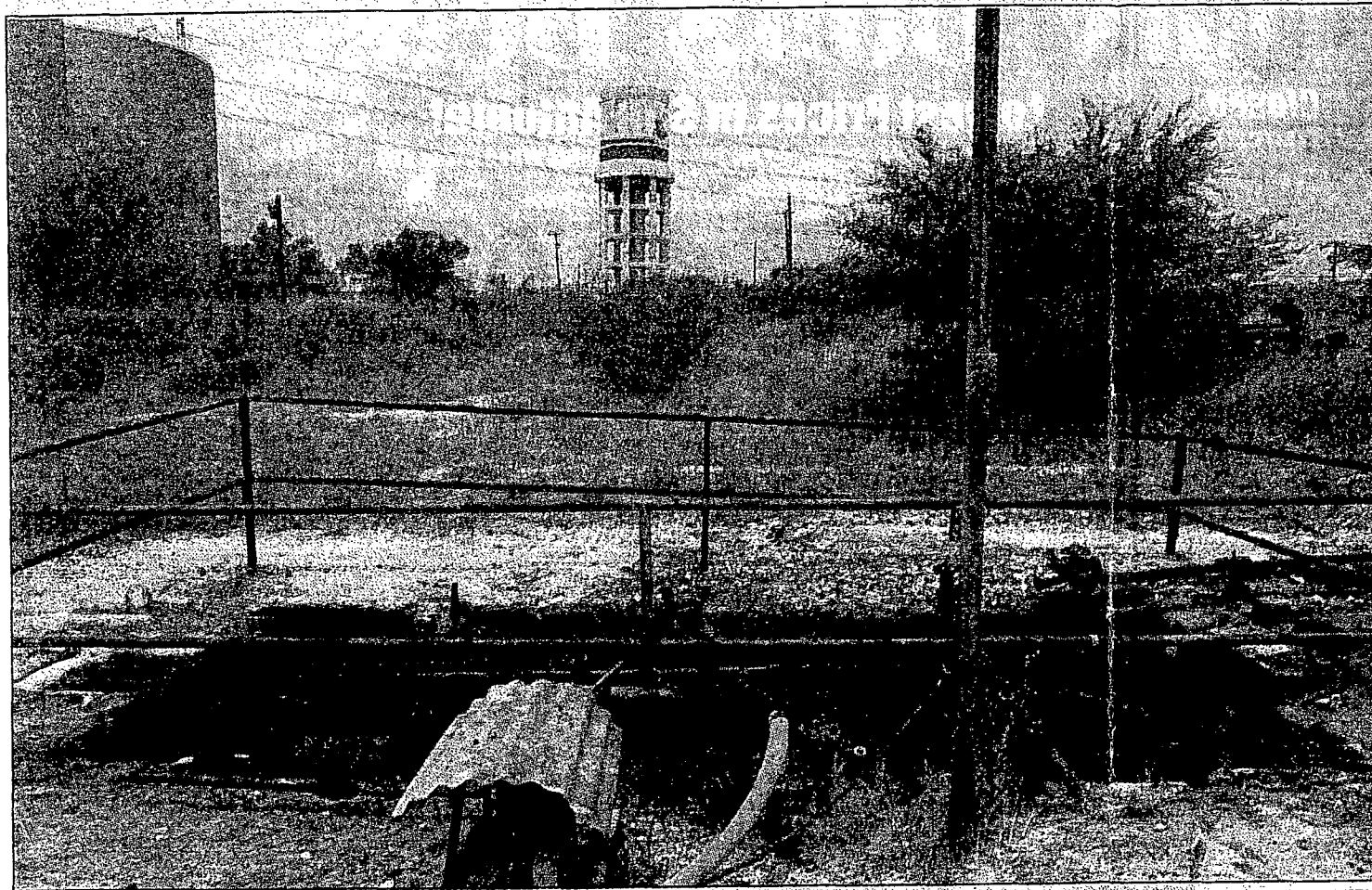
The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission asked the EPA in 1998 to evaluate the old R&H Oil site at 403 Somerset Road because the agency lacked the resources to tackle pollution it found seeping from abandoned refining systems and tanks.

The refining took place just hun-

See STATE/12A

*"Left alone, over time it's possible these contaminants would percolate through to the Edwards and pose a threat. . . ."*

EPA SPOKESMAN DAVE BARY



JERRY LARA/STAFF

Pools of oil at the former R&H site are examples of what the EPA hopes to clean up as part of the Superfund program.

## EPA adding to list of Superfund sites



Sites added and proposed to the National Priorities List. Once the Environmental Protection Agency receives public comments, it determines whether to add the sites to the NPL. Once added, the sites undergo more investigation to determine what it will take to clean them up, how much it will cost, etc.

### Proposed for listing

- 1 Casmalia Resources  
Casmalia, Calif.
- 2 Matthiessen and Hegeler  
Zinc Co.  
LaSalle, Ill.
- 3 American Creosote Works Inc.  
Louisville, Miss.
- 4 MacKenzie Chemical Works Inc.  
Central Islip, N.Y.
- 5 Valmont TCE  
Hazle Township  
and West Hazleton, Pa.
- 6 Watson Johnson Landfill  
Richland Township, Pa.
- 7 Patrick Bayou  
Deer Park
- 8 R&H Oil Co.  
San Antonio
- 9 Eureka Mills  
Eureka, Utah
- 10 Ely Copper Mine  
Vershire, Vt.

### New on the list

- 1 Cooper Drum Co.  
South Gate, Calif.
- 2 Nuclear Metals Inc.  
Concord, Mass.
- 3 Sutton Brooks Disposal Area  
Tewksbury, Mass.
- 4 Griggs & Walnut  
Ground Water Plume  
Las Cruces, N.M.
- 5 Consolidated Iron and Metal  
Newburgh, N.Y.
- 6 Shenandoah Road Ground  
Water Contamination  
East Fishkill, N.Y.
- 7 Taylor Lumber and Treating  
Sheridan, Ore.
- 8 Lower Darby Creek Area  
Delaware/Philadelphia counties
- 9 Malone Service Co. Inc.  
Texas City
- 10 Elizabeth Mine  
Stafford, Vt.

## EPA Superfund facts

■ Created by Congress in 1980 in response to citizen concerns over uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites

Sites listed on the Superfund's National Priorities List (NPL)	1,236 as of Wednesday
Sites cleaned up	Amount spent since 1980
766 including 18 sites in Texas	\$17.7 billion
Average cleanup time	Amount spent per year
10.6 years to complete in 1996	\$1.5 billion

Sources: Associated Press; Environmental Protection Agency; General Accounting Office

PATRICK ZELLER/STAFF

Page 2 of 3



# State had asked feds' help with refinery three years ago

CONTINUED FROM 1A

dreds of yards from Kelly AFB, an industrial aircraft repair depot that maintained jet and turbine engines for decades.

Air Force officials are monitoring a plume of ground water contamination from the military base, which is scheduled to close July 13.

A preliminary investigation by the EPA found a variety of contaminants from the refining process. The main contaminants are chlorinated solvents, such as trichloroethene.

The pollution is directly under the old gasoline and oil facility at R&H, and mixed with the trichloroethene flowing from Kelly.

"Adding this site to the Superfund list makes federal dollars available, allowing EPA and the TRNCC to speed their cleanup and meet the agencies' commitment to protect public health and our environment," said Gregg Cooke, the EPA regional administrator in Dallas.

Robert Huston, the TNRCC chairman in Austin, said the state would assist the EPA in the cleanup.

Cooperation between federal

and state agencies "is essential to clean up all contaminated properties, particularly those located in environmentally sensitive areas of our state," Huston said.

Thursday's action by the EPA opens a 60-day public comment period that ends Aug. 13. During that time, officials with the federal agency will begin developing a plan for cleanup and estimating the cost to remove the petroleum products from the aquifer.

According to the EPA, the contaminated aquifer, while not used as a water supply, lies directly above the Edwards Aquifer, San Antonio's sole source of drinking water.

The Edwards is one of many permeable aquifers "susceptible to natural creation of underground cavities and channels and, as such, are extremely vulnerable to contaminant migration," according to the EPA.

"The contaminants we have identified at the site pose a threat to the Edwards Aquifer," said Dave Bary, an EPA spokesman in Dallas.

"Left alone, over time it's possible these contaminants would

percolate through to the Edwards and pose a threat to drinking water supplies," he said.

But the Edwards Aquifer lies more than a 1,000 feet below the shallow aquifer, which is 20 to 40 feet below the ground surface and rests atop a 400-foot layer of dense clay and 600 feet of hard limestone.

Officials from the Edwards Aquifer Authority, the state environmental agency and the Air Force have said the pollutants in the shallow aquifer pose no threat to the Edwards unless a well sunk into the Edwards in that area is not properly cased or plugged.

Bary said there are public drinking water wells in the Edwards in the immediate area, and that the "concern is a possible interconnect from the well casings and Edwards Aquifer."

Democratic Rep. Ciro Rodriguez of San Antonio said the polluted shallow aquifer from the abandoned refinery and Kelly AFB poses a serious health threat to residents.

That pollution, he added, also is crippling economic development in the area, which lies about 6.5 miles south of down-

town.

The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) found no link between Kelly's current pollution and neighborhood health issues in the first phase of a health assessment released in 1999.

The agency is scheduled to release the study's second phase June 27.

If the site is placed on the Superfund list as expected, it will generate a federal assessment of the site's potential health effects.

"By law, a health assessment has to be initiated within a year of the designation," said John Abraham, chief of the Exposure Investigations and Consultations Branch of ATSDR.

"We have a good working relationship with the Texas Department of Health, and we will be working with them," Abraham said. "We'll look at environmental sampling data and meet with the community, then look at health outcome data in the cancer registry."

Rodriguez has asked the EPA and Air Force to fund an aggressive cleanup, health outreach program and community reinvestment plan.

"I and the entire San Antonio community demand and deserve no less," the congressman said.

The refinery was established in 1938 and changed hands several times over the decades, operating as R&H Oil, Eldorado Refining and Marketing and Tropicana Energy Co. The facility was abandoned after April 1989.

"Sludge and tar-like material have been observed around the tanks, and various chemicals have been found in the water, including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, 2-methyl naphthalene, xylenes, arsenic, barium and zinc," an EPA document states.

The chemicals were found directly below the refinery, and have not migrated, Bary said, cautioning that the "contaminants from R&H Oil are intermixed with contaminants from Kelly AFB."

The extent of the pollution prompted Texas to ask for federal aid three years ago, and Gov. Rick Perry on March 28 signed

off on the EPA's recommendation to add R&H Oil to list of proposed Superfund sites.

The EPA will consider a cleanup method called "pump and treat," which pulls the contaminated water to the surface. The pollutants are removed, and the water possibly will be injected back into the aquifer.

"We know we have a problem," Bary said. "We don't know now the precise solution to clean it up."

The EPA proposed nine other sites nationwide for Superfund cleanup, including Patrick Bayou in the Texas town of Deer Park.

The EPA will begin cleaning up 10 other locations approved Thursday for immediate action, including a 150-acre former hazardous waste storage site in Texas City.

*gmartin@express-news.net*  
Staff Writer Jerry Needham and Researcher Carolyn Edds contributed to this report.

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# Neighbors applaud move to add facility to list

Rusted pipes, tanks, drums litter R&H site

BY SONJA GARZA  
AND JERRY NEEDHAM  
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Residents who live in the shadow of the defunct R&H Oil Co. refinery across Somerset Road consider the proposed cleanup a long time coming.

"When I heard the news, I was, like, 'Thank God.' It's been that way for years," said Melissa Acosta, who lives about a block from the abandoned refinery.

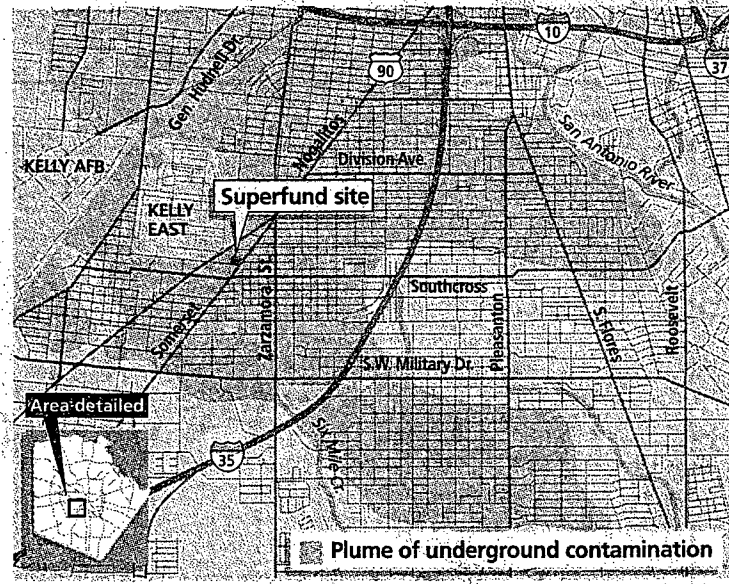
The 28-year-old schoolteacher can see the former oil company's corroded tanks from her front yard and considers the site an eyesore.

"Just looking at it, it's disgusting," she said. "I always told my roommate, 'Who knows what kind of diseases or threats to our health (it poses)?'"

Irene H. Porter, 77, who lives across the street from the old refinery, said she's concerned about the health of her two great-granddaughters, given her home's proximity to the polluted site. The 5-year-old twins visit her nearly every day.

Porter said she hasn't noticed any health problems, but "if they clean it up, it's better."

Joe Soliz, an executive committee member for Communities Organized for Public Service, said the former R&H Oil Co. once was a flourishing business for the South Side.



MARK BLACKWELL/STAFF

"But as you can tell today," he said, "it's somebody's garbage."

A broken chain-link gate fails to block the entrance of the abandoned refinery, consisting of a series of rusted oil tanks and decaying pipes.

Pipes, dozens of 55-gallon drums — some that officials say contain chlorinated solvents — and about 40 above-ground storage tanks of 5,000- to 400,000-gallon capacities, remain at the site.

Discarded tires and plastic buckets, some containing a black liquid, litter the grounds, along with the occasional puddle of black sludge.

Soliz, who grew up on the South Side, said the polluted area affects everything from the environment to property values.

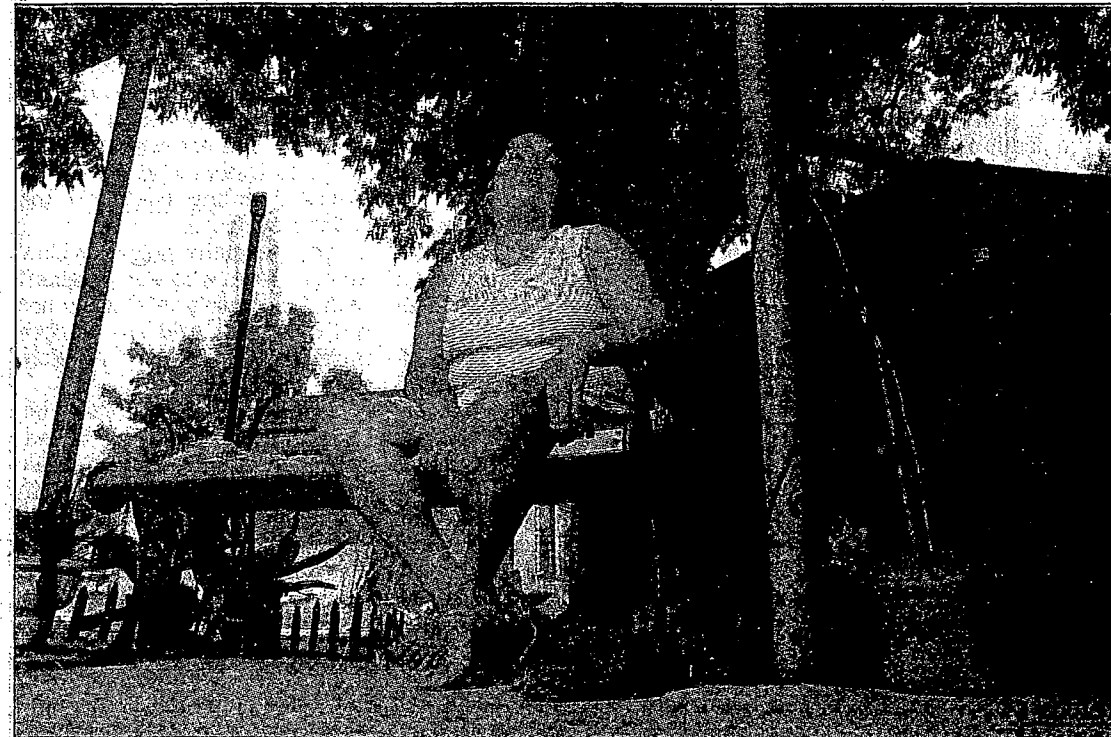
"Would you buy a home here?" he asked.

The polluted site sits atop a sea of shallow groundwater pollution caused by Kelly AFB and other industries.

Many residents fear the contamination under their homes devalues their properties. But the Bexar Appraisal District concluded last year, after market studies on home sales in areas affected by the pollution, that "at the present time, there is no demonstrable negative market impact on property values as a result of groundwater contamination."

Mayor Ed Garza said the designation of the old gasoline refinery was great news, because the more assistance the city receives from the federal government to resolve environmental problems "the better off we'll be."

While community members



JERRY LARA/STAFF

Melissa Acosta, 28, enjoys the afternoon in her shaded back yard Thursday. Although Acosta has lived near the old R&H Oil Co. for about six years, she's glad that the refinery is a possible Superfund site.

applaud the EPA for moving toward cleanup of the abandoned refinery. Armando Quintanilla said he hopes Kelly doesn't use it as an excuse to shirk its cleanup responsibility.

"I hope it doesn't delay Kelly from proceeding full steam ahead," said Quintanilla, a former Kelly employee who moved from the area after living there 48 years.

"The EPA has known about the contamination in the neighborhoods since the '80s and to this date, there is no plan to clean up the contamination,"

said Quintanilla, secretary of the Center for Health and Environmental Justice and member of the Kelly AFB Restoration Advisory Board.

Councilman Enrique Martin, whose district includes Kelly AFB, said the city will not let the Air Force off the hook for final cleanup responsibility.

Kelly, with far worse pollution problems, did not land on the federal Superfund list, but EPA officials have said that's because the Air Force was standing ready to carry out the cleanup. That's not the case with the

R&H Oil site, where it may take years to track down and force responsible parties to reimburse the government, if they have resources to do so, officials said.

William Ryan, chief of environmental restoration at Kelly for the Air Force Base Conversion Agency, said of the base cleanup: "We're still responsible for what we're responsible for, and we'll move forward with our program."

sgarza@express-news.net  
Staff Writer William Pack contributed to this report.